



Eddie A. Perez
Mayor

**MAYOR CALLS IRS LETTER TO CHURCH ON OBAMA
“INTIMIDATION”
ASKS FOR CONGRESSIONAL INVESTIGATION OF IRS LETTER ABOUT
HARTFORD SPEECH**

---NEWS RELEASE---

(February 27, 2008)--- Hartford Mayor Eddie A. Perez called on Congress today to launch an investigation into a letter sent by the Internal Revenue Service on Monday to the United Church of Christ (UCC) informing them that their non-profit status was at risk because of a speech given by church member U.S. Senator Barack Obama at the UCC’s Historic 2007 General Synod in Hartford, Connecticut. Additionally, the Mayor’s Office has learned that part of the IRS inquiry is focused on the fact Obama 2008 campaign workers were handing out literature outside the General Synod on city sidewalks and other public areas.

“Monday’s action by the IRS is an intimidation tactic aimed at preventing churches and people of faith from hearing from public officials about the important issues of the day. The IRS action is designed to intimidate not only the United Church of Christ, but also every religious group that is drawn by its faith to learn about and speak out on important issues facing our society. If the IRS is successful, every church, synagogue and mosque that invites an elected official to speak on issues such as the War in Iraq, abortion, the environment, labor and other issues of social justice could fear loss of their non-profit status. This IRS action should outrage members of both parties and people of faith throughout the country,” said Mayor Perez.

“Additionally, the idea that the IRS would object to individuals handing out political flyers on city sidewalks and other public areas is disturbing. As the Capital City of Connecticut, Hartford is a venue for many important debates and discussions about the issues facing our city, state and country. The idea that the IRS would attempt to use protected political speech as a basis for revoking a church’s non-profit status is offensive,” added Mayor Perez.

Mayor Perez will send a letter later today to U.S. Senator Joe Lieberman, U.S. Senator Chris Dodd and Congressman John Larson asking them to make an inquiry into the IRS action and ensure that the free speech rights of churches are protected and the IRS is not being used for partisan political purposes.